

## LA-UR-21-24903

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Title: Before and After: Check out these restored badge photos from the Lab's original workforce The NSRC's first large-scale photo preservation saves artifacts, creates model for future projects

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Intended for: Web

Issued: 2021-05-20

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## **Before and After: Check out these restored badge photos from the Lab's original workforce**

### **The NSRC's first large-scale photo preservation saves artifacts, creates model for future projects**

By Mott Linn, [National Security Research Center](#), Chief Librarian

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a recent large-scale restoration project yielded about 1.4 million – not to mention a lot of refreshed faces.

The badge photos of over 1,400 of the Lab's Manhattan Project workers – including our most-famous scientists J. Robert Oppenheimer, Emilio Segrè and others – had 75-plus years of built-up grime on them. Adhesive tape residue, bits of mounting materials, and environmental filth, like dust, had caused many of these historic images to discolor.

So, the Lab's [National Security Research Center](#) executed its first large-scale restoration project to repair and further preserve these valuable pieces of Los Alamos history. Had the restoration work not been performed, the badge photos would have continued to deteriorate.

The photos are part of the collections in the NSRC, which is the Lab's classified library. The NSRC also houses many unclassified pieces of the Lab's history, which are also curated by its team of specialists.

"These photos are an important part of the Lab's past," said NSRC Senior Historian Alan Carr. "The Manhattan Project was the start of the Lab we know today. Plus, that workforce was the first to dedicate themselves to our national security mission."

NSRC Director Riz Ali added, "This project is just one example of our preservation work. The NSRC has millions of materials in almost every medium imaginable, so whether it's pictures of staff, films of test shots or blueprints of engineering drawings, we're working to ensure the Lab's legacy materials are accessible now and always."

### **Restoring, preserving**

The badge photos were taken in batches to a conservator, Roger Joyce, in Santa Fe. Joyce cleaned each photo, removed stains and placed them in protective archival sleeves. It takes anywhere from about 10 to 30 minutes to clean each badge photo, most of which are about 1-and-a-half-inches by 1 inch.

The badge photo that was most transformed was of Emilio Segrè, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist and Manhattan Project Group Leader. Part of Segrè's forehead was torn off and stuck to a piece of tape. Joyce was able to repair it to its near-original state. The badge photos will now be protected indefinitely from future damage.

### **High standards, proven protocol**

This photo restoration project will serve as a model going forward for other valuable materials that may need to be restored, preserved and used by the Lab, Ali said.

The NSRC's houses the world's most comprehensive collection of nuclear weapons and national security materials dating back to the Manhattan Project. The tens of millions of materials are in a variety of media, including microfiche, microfilm, video, cassettes and notebooks; staff makes them accessible to Lab staff in support of their mission work.

"We want to ensure our history doesn't literally disappear," Ali said, "be it badges photos or weapons data."

Meanwhile, the next time you see Segrè, Oppenheimer or others from the original staff, they will look better than they have in decades.



